

Short Precise of Sermon June 30 by Rev. Dr. Mark Lewis
Sermon Title: The List

After thirty-eight years of leading congregations I have retired! And now that I have a few minutes to think, I have been asking myself what was I doing for nearly forty years, and why was I doing it? I probably should have stopped earlier to think about these things...but I didn't have time. After some reflection, I have realized that the one thing that kept me motivated and excited for all those years, was the simple awareness of Jesus' kindness and compassion towards broken, oppressed and imperfect people. The stories that drew me into a relationship with Jesus are the stories of his tenderness towards, blind Bartemaeus, the lame man, the man with the crippled hand, the man with leprosy, the woman taken in adultery, and others who were considered outcasts by the church. Why did he seek out these people? Why was so much of his ministry centered around these nobodies? The answer is in the 21st chapter of Leviticus. There the church gives a list of all the people who are not allowed to approach God: the blind, the lame, the leper and anyone with a physical defect! It is as if Jesus came into the world and said, "Give me the list of all the people who cannot come to God." The church gladly supplied the list, and Jesus made the people on the church's "black list" the most beloved of all. This is the reality which first drew me to God, mostly because I am broken, sinful, and incomplete. Every time Jesus reached out to one of them, he was reaching out to me. This is the beautiful truth that has motivated me to go into ministry and which will continue to motivate me into the future.